too large for the military's needs. Some 1,700,000 young men were classified 1-A. On the average, no more than 100,000 of them were actually drafted each year. Yet the pool, fed by new 19-year-olds in ever-increasing numbers, will brim to overflowing in the next few years as the babies of the big population years become 1-A men. Even now, the average draftee's age is a relatively elderly 23. Hundreds of thousands of young men have found themselves forced to stall off permanent career decisions, sometimes drifting aimlessly into the ranks of the unemployed because they didn't know when the Army would call.

Lieut. General Lewis B. Hershey, granddaddy of the nation's selective service system (he helped lay the groundwork in 1936, became director in 1941), was aware of—and worried about—the problem. Early this year he put staff members to work, and they recommended that married men would be an easily identifiable group to excuse from service without seriously hurting U.S. military manpower needs.

The President, who had recently wondered why married men had to go into the Army, put a White House staffer on the project to help out. From Hershey's recommendations came last week's Executive Order No. 11119—making the draft solely for bachelors. Hopefully, it would lower the average age of inductees, give them a better idea of when they would be called.

Despite eager young swains like Scott Thompson, there was no obvious rush to get married. This surprised no one at Selective Service. One official pointed out that married men have always been "traditionally" called after unmarried men anyway, and that many draftees-to-be had long ago compared the Army to matrimony and decided, "Better a two-year stretch than a lifetime sentence."

AVIATION

The Angel from the Skunk Works

On a sunny December afternoon in 1954, a small group of Air Force officers and agents of the Central Intelligence Agency drove up to the Lockheed Aircraft Corp. offices in Burbank, Calif., to confer with Company President Robert Gross and Engineer Clarence ("Kelly") Johnson.

The Government people wanted to discuss a secret airplane project, so secret that not even General Curtis LeMay, then boss of the Strategic Air Command, knew about it. That night, Kelly Johnson, head of the "Skunk Works"—Lockheed's supersecret project-development division—began clearing out a hangar. "I got 23 fellows," says Johnson, "and we went to work. We didn't even give it a project name; that's a better kind of security. Later, the fellows began calling it 'the Angel.' "

"The Angel" turned out to be an ugly, long-winged bird that precipitated a cold war crisis. Its official designation was "U-2." And last week, for the first time, Kelly Johnson, 59, revealed the dramatic details of the U-2's birth and some of its incredible achievements.

LOCKHEED'S JOHNSON, U-2 (LEFT) & F-104
"We kill, Yank!" "Okay, try it!"

The Risk. The U-2 was born of necessity. In early 1952, U.S. intelligence officers recognized that the continuing revolution in weapon design, coupled with the Soviets' fanatic penchant for secrecy, had put the U.S. at a dangerous disadvantage. The U.S. was starved for intelligence information. The most obvious solution was high-altitude air surveillance. President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson both agreed that such air reconnaissance was desirable—but they were unwilling to pursue such a project for fear of the results if a spy plane were shot down.

President Eisenhower, however, was willing to take the risk. In 1953 the CIA ordered designs for special camera equipment and sensing devices. By the time Kelly Johnson and the Skunk Works were brought into the project, the U.S. had almost everything it needed—except the airplane itself. Development of that plane was left up to Johnson. Recalls he: "Nobody ever tried to tell us what to do. We knew the problem. I knew the kind of wings I wanted."

Eighty days after he began, Johnson had built his first U-2; it was an efficient machine that could cruise at 90,000 ft. In August 1955, a test pilot flew the ship successfully—in a rainstorm.

One Died. Still the plane was not perfect. At least one pilot was killed during flight tests. "We had eliminated extra weight, however we could," says Johnson. "We'd have sold our grandmothers for ten pounds, and the whole family for 25 pounds, but finally the ship was ready." Lockheed asked Air Force Hero Jimmy Doolittle, who was then a vice president at the Shell Oil Co., to have his company's experts concoct a fuel that would not evaporate at high altitude. Shell did. The results speak for themselves. Says Johnson: "We have an airplane getting four miles to the gallon and traveling ten times the speed of a truck. That's pretty good."

On its first flights overseas, the U-2 performed impressively. From the spring of 1956 until May 1960, when U-2 Pilot Gary Powers was shot down, the U-2 flew at will over the Soviet Union, brought back miles of film showing target areas, defenses, terrain, mountains, lakes, forests. In all that time, Soviet MIG pilots swarmed helplessly below. On at least one occasion, a Soviet pilot, straining to climb to within U-2 range, radioed, "We kill, Yank!" And the U-2 pilot replied: "Okay, try it!" The pilot was safe in his dare.

But then came Gary Powers' last flight. "Powers didn't really know what hit him," says Johnson. "I knew, though, and I told him what had happened, based mostly on my analysis from the Carl Mydans photographs of the wreckage that LIFE sent us. The Soviets got to Powers with a near-burst from a SAM [surface-to-air missile]. He had control of the plane for a while, but the engine was hit. Gary coasted on down to where the MIGs had a few cracks at him; then the wing came off and he bailed out. He did everything that he was supposed to do. Those guys have ways of making anybody talk; they're clever, but Gary talked only about the things he was supposed to, nothing more. He's a good man; he's working for me now, on U-2s."

Brave Men. The U-2 presumably no longer flies over the Soviet Union. But the Nationalist Chinese fly it over Red China, and the U.S. sends missions over Cuba. "That run," says Johnson, "is the toughest in the business. It's a small area and loaded with the very latest Soviet SAM systems. In the Soviet Union we could come in from various angles over open country. Cuba is full of Castro and the Russians' SAMs. It's tough, and it takes brave men."

It also takes men like Kelly Johnson. Last week the Air Force Association presented the boss of the Skunk Works with a trophy for designing and developing the U-2—and "thus providing the free world with one of its most valuable instruments in the defense of freedom."

SOUTH VIET NAM

Report on the War

Overshadowed by the political and diplomatic turmoil in Saigon, the all but forgotten war against the Viet Cong continues on its ugly, b'oody and wearisome course. The drive against the Communists has not diminished in recent weeks; in fact, it has intensified. Fears that the Buddhist controversy might damage morale among Vietnamese troops have so far been groundless. If last week's battles were any criterion, the government soldiers are fighting better than ever against a Communist foe that is exacting a hideous price in blood in the flooded paddies of the South.

The biggest government victory in months came last week near the town of Gocong, 45 miles south of Saigon. In the dead of night, 500 Viet Cong regulars swooped down on a strategic hamlet under a screen of supporting fire from heavy machine guns and recoilless rifles. Desperately calling for help over their radio, the defenders fought back doggedly, but were barely holding out when a government infantry relief column arrived at dawn with 15 armored personnel carriers. Ambushed by the Reds, the government reinforcements did not panic, nosed their personnel carriers off the road and into the paddies, heading directly for the dug-in Reds.

From a graveyard at the fringe of the battlefield, a Viet Cong heavy machine gun knocked out an APC. But supported by government air force planes, which swept over the Red positions in screaming, shallow dives firing rockets and dropping napalm, the reinforcements rolled straight onto the Reds, mashing scores of the Communist troops into the stinking paddy mud with their huge steel treads. At last the Reds broke and ran, leaving behind 83 dead.

Mutilated Bodies. The episode made no sizable dent in the Viet Cong army. But it was heartening to U.S. military observers, who on many past occasions had watched the government's troops refuse to press their attack. This time the relief column had stood its ground under the Viet Cong pounding and then moved in on the Reds in brutal combat.

Two days later, the Reds evened the score. This time they hit the rice-rich Camau Peninsula, traditionally Communist-controlled territory where government enclaves are only islands in a sea of Viet Cong. The plan was a clever two-pronged attack against the two government-held cities of Cai Nuoc and Damdoi, which lie 15 miles apart on the southernmost tip of Viet Nam. To confuse government reinforcements and to hamper their speedy arrival, the Viet Cong first feinted at three neighboring outposts, sowed mines on a major road over which government troops had to travel, and poured harassing mortar fire on a U.S. helicopter airstrip in the area.

Shortly after midnight, the Reds hit Cai Nuoc directly. Pouring mortar shells and recoilless rifle fire in the perimeter system of defensive bunkers, the Viet Cong breached the front gate of the city's major outpost, ran from bunker to bunker lobbing in grenades and shooting the defenders in the back. The fight lasted for only 35 minutes, but the Reds occupied the town for the next 17 hours. It was a bloodbath. When reinforcements finally appeared, they found a heap of 50 mutilated bodies, including women and children, which the Reds had set afire. Of the 100-man defending force, only 25 survived.

Experts Differ. Soon thereafter, the Reds overran the neighboring town of Damdoi. But this time the Communists made the mistake of staying too long. Seven hours after the Viet Cong occupied the town, government marines, airlifted to the scene in U.S. helicopters, counterattacked. Half the marine force blocked the Reds' escape route and attacked their sandbagged positions. Armed helicopters unloaded some 80 rockets into the Communist defenses, and fighter planes zoomed in at treetop level with guns blazing. When the Reds finally disappeared into the paddies after an all-day fight, they left behind 60 dead. The government's marines were also badly battered; 48 were killed by the time the shooting stopped.

On the basis of bodies, this might be called a government victory. Not so insist some American military men who argue that such defensive responses—whatever the penalty in lives to the Communist enemy—are wasting the strength of the Vietnamese forces as well as the $1,500,000 a day the U.S. is pumping into the country. These experts will not be happy until the government can organize regular "search and hold" operations in the southern rice country, Communism's stronghold.

It is an incredibly difficult task. Though the Viet Cong are losing more men (currently about 500 a week) all the time, there are more to be killed; officials in Saigon now estimate that hard-core Communist strength has gone up from 23,000 to 31,000 over the past few months. But government strikes are at least more and more frequent. In the first week of September, 55 separate offensive ground actions of battalion

DEAD AT GOCONG
A hideous price in blood.

MERTON D. PERRY